

American Medical Association

Physicians dedicated to the health of America



August 26, 2004

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
516 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and its physician and student members, I am writing to thank you for introducing S. 2642, the "Smuggled Tobacco Prevention Act of 2004." This legislation addresses both the public health problems caused by tobacco and the financial consequences of tobacco smuggling. By imposing new labeling and reporting requirements, S. 2642 would allow better tracking of tobacco products, as well as greater information sharing among countries.

The public health consequences of tobacco smuggling are significant, especially with respect to youth smoking. In this country, 4,800 children try smoking for the first time every day, and over 40% of these children will become regular smokers. According to the World Health Organization, price is the single most important factor in short-term tobacco consumption patterns. Thus, children are more likely to try smoking as it becomes easier to obtain cheap, smuggled tobacco.

Illegal tobacco smuggling also has significant financial implications. State and federal governments lose more than \$1.5 billion annually in uncollected taxes. This critically needed revenue could otherwise be spent on public health efforts.

The AMA strongly supports efforts to reduce the consumption of tobacco products, especially by our youth. This legislation is a step in that direction and is the type of public health measure that Congress should pass. We are pleased to support this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael D. Maves".

Michael D. Maves, MD, MBA